

# SPOTLIGHT

Dedicated to informing and connecting Tocqueville Society Members | Winter 2026



# WELCOME

## On the cover



United Way partner agency Trade Institute Pittsburgh trains people, including those just leaving incarceration and homelessness, for work in construction and masonry. Their innovative License to Thrive program helps program participants overcome a major hurdle to success: getting drivers licenses and securing reliable low-cost vehicles. Read more on page 3.

*Photo courtesy of Trade Institute Pittsburgh.*

## 2024-2025 Tocqueville Society Committee Members

Amy Crawford-Faucher, Allegheny Health Network, *co-chair*

Augustine "Gus" Faucher, PNC, *co-chair*

BJ Blose, KPMG

Chris Brennan, Reed Smith

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Jim Newell, Buchanan, Ingersoll & Rooney

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Mary Richter, Mosiac Soup

David Riehl, Baird

Darrell Smalley, EY

Laura Strobel, PwC

Chris Thel, K&L Gates

Ray Zipay, PNC Financial Services Group, Inc

## Six goals to drive bold change

As we look ahead to a brighter future for our region, United Way has set bold, aspirational goals to guide our work over the next four years. By 2027, we strive to lift 6,600 households above the ALICE threshold; position 211 as the leading resource for human services in southwestern Pennsylvania; and inspire hope and action by creating opportunities for giving, volunteering and advocacy. We aim to help our nonprofit agencies build capacity, build a strong success pipeline for young people in our region; and amplify community voices and advance policy change that helps people thrive. Learn more on at [UnitedWaySWPA.org/about-us/aspirational-goals](https://UnitedWaySWPA.org/about-us/aspirational-goals).



**ASSET LIMITED,  
INCOME CONSTRAINED,  
EMPLOYED.**

# CEO PERSPECTIVE

## SNAP crisis brought back memories, prompted action.

By Bobbi Watt Geer, Ph.D.



One of my most vivid childhood memories is of a simple act of kindness by one of my mother's good friends. I was 11 years old, and it was the late 1970s. My mother was a single parent to two teenagers. Money was tight and she was doing her best

to navigate the circumstances. The November 2025 government shutdown, which temporarily disrupted food assistance for millions of Americans, brought back some of those difficult memories.

That afternoon, my mother's friend left several bags of groceries on our dining room table. I could read the deep sense of gratitude and relief on her face. The job market was challenging, especially for a single parent. My mother did her best, stringing together jobs to support us. She worked the overnight shift for minimum wage at a convenience store. She loaded packages on UPS trucks, also overnight hours. She didn't like leaving us on our own, but it was the only way to earn some money and be there for us during the day and evenings.

Her story will sound familiar to anyone in the 38% of the regional population who fall within United Way's Asset Limited, Income Constrained and Employed (ALICE) threshold. ALICE refers to people who, despite working full-time, are unable to make ends meet. Despite always working multiple jobs, my mother had difficulty earning enough for groceries and our other bills. I never recall being hungry, but we ate a lot of mac and cheese and SPAM.

At that time, we used what was then called "food stamps," now known as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), which launched in the 1960s to help lower-income wage earners access food and also to support the agricultural economy.

We lived in a small town. It was awkward to have to use food stamps. Running into friends and neighbors in the store was inevitable and uncomfortable. At school, our dark purple free lunch ticket was hole punched by the lunch ladies as the other students waited behind me in line. It took me a very long time to move beyond the embarrassment and to recognize that my mother's hard work and heroics paved the way for a better life for my brother and me.

Nearly 50 years later, too many families continue to struggle, despite working one or more jobs, to meet their basic needs. About 300,000 households in our five-county service area experienced a freeze in SNAP benefits in November, the first time in history that this benefit was halted. We saw food-related contacts to our 211 help center increase 210% this November over last. Families faced impossible financial decisions and lined up around the block at food banks and pantries.

With donations from supporters including The Heinz Endowments, Duquesne Light Company, Eat'n Park Hospitality Group, Kennametal, Inc. and the Fleming-Rodgers Group of Baird, United Way created an Emergency Food Assistance Fund that distributed \$640,000 to community-based organizations providing food assistance. We mobilized our advocacy system, met with legislators, wrote editorials and ran a third Meal Kit Packing.

While philanthropy can never fill the gaps left by a government shutdown, it was an honor to step up to help our neighbors avoid hunger. I think about my mother that day more than 50 years ago and how the groceries we received relieved some of her worry about having enough to eat. As United Way donors, your willingness to step up when we needed you meant that families across our region had a reprieve from food insecurity. 📍

# IMPACT FEATURE

## License to Thrive puts people on the road to financial stability.

By Emma Martin



For students looking to enter the trades, reliable transportation is as essential as skills and tools. Construction workers can't rely on buses to get to job sites outside of traditional work hours, especially in rural areas, and trade union jobs often require a valid driver's license.

With support from United Way, the Trade Institute of Pittsburgh is working to help those re-entering the workforce after incarceration, homelessness or other challenges. Their approach? Teach people to drive, get licenses and save to purchase their own car while they're learning and working.

The Trade Institute focuses on trade skills and life skills to help students with significant barriers to employment access career opportunities. The nonprofit offers 10-week tuition-free training in masonry and carpentry, as well as social service support and job placement.

Senior Case Manager Kirk Gilbert oversees the Trade Institute's License to Thrive program, which in three years has helped more than 100 people obtain their drivers' licenses. Funded in part by United Way, it's an innovative, human-centered program that directly addresses the transportation barrier to employment.

Who does the Trade Institute serve? "Basically, anyone who is willing to learn and wants to work," says Gilbert. "We help people who have more complex needs that other job training and readiness programs don't serve. We are here for our most vulnerable neighbors."

License to Thrive helps insured students "rent" a Trade Institute-owned vehicle during the day to get to job sites. The weekly rate they pay to use the car is escrowed so they can purchase their own vehicle through the Trade Institute, which buys low-cost vehicles specifically for students from dealership partners. That way, students with low or no credit can avoid high interest rates on vehicle purchases.

License to Thrive also preps students to pass their driver's test. Gilbert teaches safety and driving lessons, letting students get comfortable with the basics in parking lots before venturing out onto the roads for more practice. The Trade Institute also helps students resolve paperwork, restitution fees and fines standing in the way of getting their license.

The Trade Institute brings dignity to the whole person, says Gilbert, accepting clients without a high school diploma or GED or with criminal backgrounds into its tuition-free programs. Case managers work with every new student to identify goals and life skills to align with their circumstances.

Gilbert recalls the Trade Institute's oldest client Kenny, 55, who spent 20 years in prison before being pardoned. The day Kenny got his license; he picked Gilbert up and spun him around.

"Everyone's a teenager the day they get their license," he says.

Success can look like a career in the trades or a return to treatment for substance use disorder. The Trade Institute's doors always remain open to graduates who return in need of services.

Best of all, the Trade Institute is now looking to start offering its rent-to-own vehicle services to other nonprofits as a potential revenue stream. 📌

*Image provided by The Trade Institute of Pittsburgh.*



### United Way for YOU

United Way's UW4Me mobile engagement tool is the fastest, easiest way to register for events, sign up to volunteer and track giving history. It's customized to you, so you easily find experiences that align with your interests and goals. It's free and easy to use. *Sign up today!*



# EVENTS THAT UNITE

## IMPACT Awards: Nov. 19, 2025

At the IMPACT Awards (Individuals Making Progress And Creating Transformation), we honored three incredible volunteers who embody dedication to our community: Jan Shipp of Vintage Center for Active Adults in East Liberty (\$15,000 to Vintage) and Dave Meredith of East End United Community Center in Uniontown (\$5,000 for the community garden). Makayla Flick, age 15, received an honorable mention for her service to Ford City Public Library where she has volunteered since age 11. Special thanks to our IMPACT Award selection committee members: Lee Bannister, Amanda Cashman, Faisal Hamadi, Jeffrey Himrod, Samuel Kirsch, George Long, George Magera, Mark Minnaugh, Eric OKunewick, Neil Orbin, Emily Orbin, Sandra Pinkney, Dan Sandroni, Carole Shepard, Denise Smalley, Jim Steen, Colette Steen and Darlene Wisniewski.

**Row one (left to right):** Alex & Kate Gionta; Darrell Smalley, Bobbi Watt Geer, Colette Steen, Jim Steen, Dave Meredith, Jan Shipp, Jim McQuade, Amy Crawford-Faucher, Gus Faucher; Betty Lamb and Carole Shepard. **Row two:** Sandra & Dwayne Pinkney; Dmitri & Ann Shiry; George & Amy Long, Ray Zipay. **Row three:** Jeffrey & Sharon Evans; Lori & Ben Stas, Nick Pflugh; Maris Dauer, Stacy Juchno, Gus Faucher.



**United for Opportunity: A shared vision for our region's future: Jan. 29, 2026**

CEOs from top companies and Tocqueville Society donors gathered for a strategic conversation about how our region can fulfill its promise by creating a new vision for our economy and the human services sector. Highmark's David Holmberg set the tone. Bobbi Watt Geer provided an overview of challenges facing the nonprofit sector and Gus Faucher, PNC and Tocqueville Society co-chair, explained how macroeconomic conditions are contributing to hardship for many families. Darrell Smalley, EY, then facilitated a panel discussion with Brooks Broadhurst, Eat'n Park, Rebekah Byers Kcehowski, Jones Day, and Jordan Golin, JFCS, each of whom is connected to United Way. Sally Ellwein invited the audience to offer their feedback and insights. A summary of the findings will be published in the *Pittsburgh Business Times*.

**Row one (left to right):** Darrell Smalley, Jordan Golin, Brooks Broadhurst, Rebekah Byers Kcehowski; **Carl Daley.** **Row two:** David Riehl, Steve Thompson; Deb Rice-Johnson, Bobbi Watt Geer, Karen Hanlon, Craig Riner. **Row three:** Angela Weidman, Kate Gionta; Tony Farah.



**Hometown Huddle: Sept. 16, 2025**

Members of the Tocqueville Society volunteered with the Pittsburgh Steelers at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania in Lawrenceville. Volunteers facilitated after-school program activities with students and teachers.

**Row one (left to right):** Jeff Evans, Chaton Turner, Beth Abriatis, Darrell Smalley, Dwayne Pinkney, David Yanchik; Jeff Evans, Logan Lee, Marc Lippa. **Row two:** Darrell Smalley, David Yanchik, Linda Jones, Dwayne Pinkney, Darrin Schindler, Chris Watts; Beth Abriatis, Chaton Turner.



# IMPACT FEATURE

## GEARING UP FOR GOOD: We need your help evaluating funding proposals.

Every three years, United Way invites nonprofit agencies across our five-county region to submit proposals for a multi-year grant opportunity. We need your help reviewing proposals and making funding decisions. We've developed a transparent process that funds outstanding agencies making a big impact in the communities they serve.

**How our process is different.** While many funders rely solely on internal staff or a small committee, we engage more than 100 donors and community members in the decision-making process. This "big tent" approach brings diverse perspectives to the table and creates a network of informed, engaged leaders who understand the challenges nonprofits face. We offer three years of funding to our agency partners, allowing us to provide real financial stability, cultivate deep relationships, and build program capacity, so that agencies are as effective as they can be.

**Step one: letters of intent.** The process begins with an eligibility prescreen to confirm nonprofit status and service area. Agencies then submit a Letter of Intent (LOI), which includes a brief overview of their mission, services and alignment with United Way's priorities.

**Step two: full proposals.** Agencies with strong LOIs are invited to submit a full proposal, including audited financials, budgets, Form 990s and projected outcomes. We've streamlined this process to reduce administrative burden while still gathering the data we need to make informed decisions. Our Community Impact team offers office hours and one-on-one support to help agencies strengthen their proposals.

**Step three: thoughtful review.** Once proposals are in, each application undergoes an initial review by Community Impact staff, followed by evaluation from a diverse group of volunteer reviewers — donors, board members, subject matter experts and community leaders. Reviewers collaborate and are trained to use a scoring rubric and provide comments, which are averaged and compiled for each proposal. Every application is reviewed by five to seven evaluators, who meet to discuss scores and advocate for strong proposals.



**Beyond the check: ongoing partnership.** Every agency United Way funds is considered a partner. Community Impact staff are in touch often, conducting mid-year check-ins either virtual or on-site to discuss barriers and opportunities. These conversations often lead to additional resources, such as technology grants or volunteer engagement. Every partner agency also submits an end-of-year report detailing outcomes and progress toward goals.

If concerns arise, we act, asking clarifying questions because we know that 50,000 donors trust us to steward their contributions effectively. Agencies not funded are offered feedback sessions to help them strengthen future applications and, in some cases, receive invitations to apply for targeted grants.

**The hardest part: funding gaps.** The biggest challenge is that there are always more outstanding proposals than there are resources. In our last cycle, we received 136 highly competitive proposals totaling \$11.4 million, but we had only \$7.5 million to award. Every unfunded proposal represents unmet needs. We're working to close this gap through initiatives like our \$40 million 100th anniversary endowment Fund for Transformation and Resilience.

As we gear up for the next RFP cycle, we invite you to join us as volunteer reviewers. Training begins soon. You'll receive an email or a call about how to sign up. With your help, United Way will continue to verify, collaborate and invest in excellence so that every dollar makes a difference. 🌱

# DONOR FEATURE

## Augustine (Gus) Faucher, Ph.D. and Amy Crawford-Faucher, M.D.

*Gus Faucher and Amy Crawford-Faucher bring unique perspectives to their roles as Tocqueville Society Co-Chairs. Gus is chief economist for the PNC Financial Services Group. Amy, a family physician, chairs the Primary Care Institute and Department of Family Medicine at Allegheny Health Network. We asked them about their work and what they wish people knew about United Way.*

### You've been married since 1990. How did you meet?

**Amy:** I had just applied to transfer from Wells College to Cornell when we met at a party. We were both 19. Gus was a sophomore at Cornell at the time.

**Gus:** On one of our first dates, I accompanied Amy to her biology lab job so she could feed mice to the boa constrictor. It was a bit gruesome but I was impressed that she was interested in science!

**Amy:** After college we spent a year apart. I worked at a hospital in Boston and Gus spent a year volunteering with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps in San Antonio, Texas. Pre-cell phone, we could only afford one phone call a week so we wrote a lot of letters. It was a good way to really get to know one another.

### How did your experience growing up influence your views on charitable giving?

**Amy:** Money was often a stressor during my childhood – we had to get creative to feed and clothe our large family. Despite those challenges, my parents were dedicated to community service and generous with their time. Their most impactful project was starting the volunteer ambulance squad in our town.

**Gus:** I saw my parents serve on nonprofit boards. After my dad retired, he became involved with the Suicide Prevention Lifeline Philadelphia crisis hotline and received their volunteer of the year award.



**THEN:** Gus, Amy and one-year-old Justine at the family's house in Champaign, Illinois, circa 1994. Gus had a one-year visiting professorship at University of Illinois and Amy took a gap year between medical school and residency.

### We're constantly talking about the 38% of people regionally who live at or below the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained and Employed) threshold and work full-time but don't earn enough to pay for the essentials. Does the ALICE population influence your work?

**Gus:** My job with PNC is primarily to think about the broader economy. How well are people doing and what does the job market look like? We're looking at conditions for hundreds of millions of people. What's true for the broader economy may not be true for all groups, such as ALICE. Amy is constantly reminding me that these groups are composed of actual people. But I am looking at issues like household incomes and the effect of inflation on families.

**Amy:** He's right. Gus thinks about the slices of the economy. I think about individuals. Growing up with a taste of economic insecurity has helped me meet patients where they are. We also assess social determinants of health in all of our patients so that we can connect them to resources when needed.

# YOUR DONATIONS AT A GLANCE

Thanks to your contributions, nearly 1.48 million people have accessed life-changing services.



**NOW:** Amy and Gus at the fall 2026 IMPACT Awards, where outstanding volunteers were honored by United Way and the Toccqueville Society.

## When you think about United Way's investment priorities, which is most important to you and why?

**Amy:** All are important and interrelated, but if you're looking at the hierarchy of needs, it is basic needs for me. It's hard to think about success in school and financial stability if you don't have affordable food and shelter.

**Gus:** Thinking about how we build an economy that works for everyone over the long run, building for success in school and life is how we get there. Investing in providing people with the tools to succeed in the economy is vital.

## What do you wish people understood about United Way?

**Amy:** I wish folks could see the thought process that goes into vetting and awarding Multi-Year Grants. It's about hearts and souls, but it is also a highly organized and data-driven process, which gets the money to where it can make the biggest difference.

**Gus:** I would add the importance of unrestricted giving, meaning giving to United Way without limiting which agencies will benefit. There are so many issues crying out for attention. By giving without restrictions to United Way, the staff utilize the funding much more efficiently than I could on my own. 🙌

*Photos courtesy of the Crawford-Faucher family.*

## MEETING BASIC NEEDS



## MOVING TO FINANCIAL STABILITY



## BUILDING FOR SUCCESS IN SCHOOL & LIFE



Results are from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025. Numbers reflect that United Way of Southwestern PA's 211 resource navigators handle contacts and web searches for all of southwestern, northeast and southeast Pennsylvania.

# — UNITED WAY — TOCQUEVILLE SOCIETY

ALL LEADERSHIP DONORS

## United is the Way Leadership Breakfast

Thursday, March 19 | 8 to 9:30 a.m.

Location: Giant Eagle Corporate Office

Hear about the most significant issues facing our region and how nonprofits, with support from United Way, are rising to the challenges so that everyone can thrive.

ALL LEADERSHIP DONORS

## Leadership in Action

Wednesday, March 4 | 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Location: Knead Community Café

Take a deep dive into the work of Knead Community Café and engage in hands-on service that directly benefits the agency and their clients.

VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

## 211 Experience

Feb. 24 | 1 to 3 p.m. and

April 9 and June 23 | 9 to 10:30 a.m.

Location: United Way – Pittsburgh office

Get an inside look into the work of our 211 team, learn about the significant needs of our neighbors and the resources made available to those who contact 211.

WOMEN UNITED

## Celebrate to Elevate

Wednesday, April 29 | 5:15 to 8 p.m.

Location: PNC Firstside Center

Unite with your friends from Women United and guests as we uplift one another and the community at this annual signature event.

## LEAVING A LEGACY

Whether you are managing a loved one's estate or assets of your own, nothing is more satisfying than leaving a legacy to your community to impact people's lives. When you make a planned gift to United Way, you will support meaningful work while also benefiting from tax-free giving or tax reductions that provide a better financial outcome for your estate. Contact Linda Jones at **412-456-6768** or **[linda.jones@unitedwayswpa.org](mailto:linda.jones@unitedwayswpa.org)** for more information.



More great Tocqueville conversation continues online. Connect with the Tocqueville Society LinkedIn group to be a part of it at [linkedin.com/groups/7461160](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/7461160).